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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 35th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MONGBE (Benin)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

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AGENDA ITEM 171: EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE FOR THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC REHABILITATION OF RWANDA (continued) (A/48/241)

1. Mr. VANDUNEM "MBINDA" (Angola) said that since the resumption of fighting by UNITA in October 1992, thousands had been killed or wounded and about 3 million persons had become displaced. Despite the difficult conditions, the Angolan Government had launched a far-reaching programme for economic stability intended to provide emergency relief to the sectors of the population most severely affected and to accelerate economic activity. It had also approved structural adjustment measures including devaluation of the currency in an effort to promote recovery of the key economic sectors.

2. The economic and social situation in Angola had been aggravated by drought, famine and war ravaging the central and southern regions. Continuing efforts were needed on the part of the international community to assist Angola in rehabilitating its economy. His Government took the opportunity to express its gratitude for the many forms of assistance provided by various Governments and organizations and specialized agencies of the United Nations system. It also paid tribute to those who had lost their lives in the course of humanitarian efforts in Angola. International assistance to Angola should begin to move from the stage of purely humanitarian assistance to encompass rehabilitation and development for long-term results, however.

(Mr. Vandunem "Mbinda", Angola)

3. He confirmed that the Government of Angola and UNITA were once again meeting face to face under United Nations auspices, and expressed the hope that peace would finally prevail.

4. Mr. OZOLINS (World Health Organization), reporting on the progress of the International Programme on the Health Effects of the Chernobyl Accident (IPHECA), said that it was a cooperative effort among Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine as the affected States, WHO and a number of other countries and organizations, financed exclusively by voluntary resources. It concentrated on the highest priority health issues: leukaemia and related blood diseases, selected thyroid diseases, brain damage from prenatal exposure and management of epidemiological registers. Pilot projects were being implemented in each of those areas. Specialists had examined thousands of people, both adults and children, and WHO had assisted the effort by providing equipment and instrumentation, diagnostic kits, international expertise and training of specialists.

5. Special attention continued to be given to the incidence of thyroid cancer, particularly in Belarus. A meeting of experts held in October 1992 in Kiev had confirmed that a considerable increase had occurred in the incidence of thyroid cancer in children in Belarus and, to a lesser extent, in Ukraine; the incidence among adults had also increased. Scientists were still seeking answers to the enigma of the wide variations in the epidemiological situation of thyroid cancer from one country or region to another. A long-term epidemiological study of children exposed to radio-iodine was needed.

6. The International Programme was intended to be sustained over several decades. Its main aim was to relieve the health consequences of the accident by assisting the health authorities in affected countries and providing equipment, training, expert advice and exchange of information. Its other objective was to consolidate experience gained, thereby improving medical preparedness for the future. The limited financial support available for the pilot phase would be exhausted by mid-1994, but the need to continue the programme was obvious. Support was required to continue and expand the projects on thyroid, haematology, developmental brain disorders and standardized registration of data and information. In addition, the long-term epidemiological study of thyroid cancer incidence in the affected areas was a high priority. New activities, including the study and treatment of the persons who had taken part in the immediate aftermath of the accident, the identification and reduction of its psycho-social impact, genetic effects and dose reconstruction were also needed. The knowledge and experience gained from the aftermath of Chernobyl would benefit the entire international community. Health studies would make an essential contribution to the assessment of the total impact of the accident, allowing for the development of realistic emergency preparedness and response plans if similar events occurred in the future. They also provided a unique addition to the body of knowledge of the risks from activities involving exposure to radiation, thus improving comparisons of the risks of different forms of energy production.

7. Mr. ACHARYA (Nepal), commenting on the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, said that whereas the developed countries generally suffered heavy capital losses and relatively lower loss of life, in developing countries the situation was the reverse. The suffering of the survivors, however, was the same.

8. The continuum from relief to rehabilitation and development must be part of any strategy to mitigate the consequences of natural disasters. Relief assistance did, indeed, save many lives, but relief must be followed by rehabilitation and development. Accordingly, some flexibility must be built into the country programmes of the United Nations operational agencies. An appropriate development strategy was the most important matter for consideration at the upcoming World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction.

9. The report of the Secretary-General on strengthening the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance (A/48/536) indicated that the United Nations system was well prepared to provide early warning, assess needs, prepare appeals and implement relief activities. The transfer of such technology and knowledge to developing countries must be increased, however. In 1993, Nepal had experienced the worst floods and landslides in its history. Thousands of people had lost their homes and livelihoods and the damage to infrastructure was enormous. It was a stark reminder that Nepal, a country prone to natural disaster, did not have even the most basic capabilities in areas such as hazard mapping and risk assessment. The World Conference must emphasize a mechanism to ensure the transfer of knowledge and technology on prevention to developing countries.

10. With the establishment of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, coordination among United Nations agencies had improved, but much remained to be done. As the General Assembly had stressed at its forty-fourth session, special attention must be given to the least developed, land-locked and island developing countries. Their special problems must be taken into account when deciding on any action plan designed in the context of the Decade.

11. Mr. PETERS (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), said that the level and emphasis of UNHCR operations varied from one situation to another. In Croatia, for instance, UNHCR was leading the United Nations effort to bring relief to refugees and internally displaced persons. As a result of the resurgence of fighting in Angola, on the other hand, its voluntary repatriation activities had been curtailed. The prospects for voluntary return were marginally better in Afghanistan, where persons willing to repatriate despite the unsettled situation were being assisted by repatriation grant programmes located in Pakistan and Iran. Its activities in Afghanistan had focused on rehabilitation to allow local communities to absorb the internally displaced persons and the estimated 6 million refugees. On a brighter note, major repatriation movements to El Salvador had been concluded and attention was now focused on local settlement of refugees and reintegration of returnee populations.

12. In the search for solutions to the problems facing those countries, three basic points became apparent. First, the suffering in those areas demonstrated the growing discrepancy between the needs of the affected populations and the resources available to meet them. Second, the requirements of reconstruction

and rehabilitation demonstrated the need for improved coordination in the transition from relief to rehabilitation. Third, the problems in each of those war-ravaged countries illustrated that humanitarian action could not function in a vacuum, for it merely alleviated the symptoms; only sustained political action by the international community could affect the root causes. Humanitarian and political efforts must therefore be coordinated through mutually supportive action.

13. Coordination from the top down was not always successful, but it could work where realistic, agreed and concrete objectives were spelled out and where coordinating structures were adapted to the demands of particular situations. UNHCR had taken a number of initiatives to strengthen its coordination efforts with development, regional and other humanitarian organizations, United Nations political and peace-keeping initiatives, non-governmental organizations and concerned Governments. The International Conference on Central American Refugees (CIREFCA) process, managed by a joint UNHCR/UNDP support unit, represented a practical model of how coordination on the relief-to-development continuum could work. In May 1993, as the emphasis had shifted from repatriation and relief to reintegration and development, UNDP had assumed leadership of the programme, allowing UNHCR to scale down its activities. In the same vein, the agreement between UNHCR and the World Food Programme was a successful model that could be replicated with other agencies. It specified the modalities and parameters for delivery of food in refugee situations and the relative operational responsibilities, in order to avoid duplication and to ensure complementarity, but it was subject to periodic revision as circumstances changed. In the former Yugoslavia, where UNHCR was the lead agency, coordination had greatly enhanced the complementarity of humanitarian and political efforts.

14. Coordination worked where respective roles were clearly delineated to ensure complementarity and draw on comparative advantage. The constant priority of UNHCR was to reinforce its links with partners and search for new ones in a coordinated international humanitarian effort. In that sense, coordination and partnership were more than abstract concepts; they were a daily goal.

15. Ms. ARYSTANBEKOVA (Kazakhstan) said that, during the first years of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, severe disasters in various parts of the world had shown that natural disasters continued to pose a major threat to human life and property, and her delegation encouraged the international community to speed up the implementation of the objectives of the Decade through improved coordination and machinery.

16. Her delegation welcomed the efforts of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to promote coordination within the United Nations system with a view to ensuring a comprehensive approach to natural disaster reduction. Such coordination should continue to benefit from the experience of such United Nations bodies and agencies as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United

(Ms. Arystanbekova, Kazakhstan)

Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Health Organization (WHO), especially in the provision of training and technical assistance to disaster-prone countries.

17. Kazakhstan and Central Asia as a whole was a large disaster-prone region which, unfortunately, had not been fully incorporated within the framework of the Decade. Kazakhstan was the ninth largest country in the world, and the diversity of its natural environment and broad industrial infrastructure made it vulnerable to both natural and technological disasters. Earthquakes of up to 7.9 on the Richter scale occurred in the mountainous regions, as did mudflows, avalanches, landslips and landslides, while other regions were vulnerable to spring flooding. In April and May 1993, severe floods in western Kazakhstan, had resulted in heavy death toll and sizeable material losses. Her delegation wished to express the gratitude of the Government and people of Kazakhstan to the United Nations and the Governments of Japan, Italy, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and Luxembourg for their relief assistance to the victims of the flood.

18. The international community was already aware of the man-made disasters of the Aral Sea and the Semipalatinsk nuclear testing site in Kazakhstan. Her delegation called upon the countries of the world to help to avert another environmental disaster in the Caspian Sea region. The rapidly rising level of water in the Caspian Sea not only caused flooding of adjacent territory but also endangered the environmental balance of the entire region.

19. In order to deal with problems of natural and man-made disasters, Kazakhstan had established the State Commission on Emergency Situations. The Commission drew widely on international experience and promoted bilateral and multilateral cooperation. Bilateral agreements were currently being drawn up with the Russian Federation, Germany and Italy.

20. In connection with the activities and programmes of the Decade, the Government had set up the National Committee on the Decade whose main objective was to create a reliable system of natural disaster reduction and to promote cooperation in that field at the international level. Since many major cities, towns and other settlements in Kazakhstan were situated in active seismic zones, the National Committee and the State Commission of Kazakhstan were focusing on earthquake hazards. Kazakh experts believed that a comprehensive approach to the reduction of earthquake hazards should incorporate reliable earthquake forecasting, the use of modern construction technologies and materials, efficient reinforcement of old and unreliable buildings and structures, and education of the population about earthquake-reduction problems. In order to elaborate and implement such a system in Kazakhstan and Central Asia as a whole, national efforts should receive strong international support.

21. Her delegation proposed that the United Nations should establish a Centre of Seismology and Seismic Construction Technologies in Kazakhstan, with headquarters at Alma Ata, which would serve as the Centre's scientific and technical base.

22. Kazakhstan supported the interregional project on the reduction of vulnerability to natural or technological disasters in metropolitan areas, sponsored by the World Bank, UNDP and UNCHS, and invited them to choose

(Ms. Arystanbekova, Kazakhstan)

Alma Ata, which had a population of 1.5 million and was vulnerable to natural and technological disasters, as a case for their detailed studies. Problems relating to natural and technological disaster reduction in Kazakhstan and Central Asia in general should be addressed within the framework of the Consultative Group meetings of the World Bank and UNDP. Those problems should also be dealt with by the United Nations interim office in Alma Ata.

23. Ms. CAREY (Bahamas), speaking on behalf of the 12 States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction provided the international community with a programme of action to minimize, if not eliminate, the loss of life and devastation resulting from the destructive effects of nature. The Decade should be instrumental in promoting the transfer of appropriate knowledge and technology to those communities in many developing countries that were less capable of reducing the impact of natural disasters. Technical cooperation and development programmes that emphasized technology transfer, institution-building, procurement and installation of equipment and facilities, and human resources development, would help overcome impediments to improvements in disaster reduction.

24. CARICOM commended the initiatives of the international community, including the European Development Fund (EDF), Germany, Italy and the Netherlands, to provide funding specifically for demonstration projects. It also commended the joint effort of the International Council of Scientific Unions and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) in projects that would improve early warning systems for climate-related hazards. UNDP and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs had held useful workshops in 18 countries and had provided training materials to more than 100 countries. CARICOM also appreciated the UNESCO Training Materials for Disaster Reduction that had been developed for civil servants and the staff of non-governmental organizations.

25. The Pan-Caribbean Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Project, which provided inter alia for training of personnel, technical assistance, surveys of vulnerable areas and improvement of telecommunications systems in the region, had increased the region's capacity for disaster management. Following the conclusion of that project, steps had been taken to create a permanent regional mechanism to provide for an automatic, immediate and coordinated response to natural disasters and humanitarian emergencies; the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency had become operational in September 1991. One area of concentration in the Agency's work programme for 1993-1996 would involve development of disaster mitigation and prevention strategies in the Caribbean subregion.

26. The implementation of the activities of the Decade must be facilitated through extrabudgetary resources. A solution to the funding problem could be provided by financial institutions, public and private corporations, industrial enterprises, foundations and other non-governmental organizations. Every effort must be made to give top priority to the financing of the Decade. In that regard, CARICOM was looking forward to the 1994 World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction, which should encourage the exchange of ideas and experiences and promote strategies for disaster preparedness, mitigation and recovery.

(Ms. Carey, Bahamas)

27. The link between natural disaster prevention and sustainable development had been recognized and incorporated into Agenda 21, and the CARICOM countries welcomed the fact that disaster mitigation programmes would be an integral part of the anticipated outcome of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States to be held in Barbados in May 1994. That should include specific actions at the regional, national and international levels to assist disaster-prone small States in preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery.

28. The Caribbean Community supported the efforts of the United Nations to intensify special economic and disaster relief assistance, and to link special economic and disaster relief assistance with the development planning of countries affected by disasters. However, it was necessary to focus on enhancing developing countries' capability to reduce and prevent natural disasters, which would enable them to minimize the damage caused to life and property.

29. Mr. ANDEMICAEL (International Atomic Energy Agency) said that, in its efforts to mitigate the radiological consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) had carried out a major project with FAO. Cattle in the areas affected by fallout from the accident were being given a compound called Prussian blue, which radically and safely reduced Caesium-137 contamination in meat and milk. That project had been based on recommendations made by the 1990 International Chernobyl Project, which had been organized by IAEA with the participation of the Commission of the European Communities, FAO, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR), WHO and WMO.

30. In corroborating the evidence on the environmental contamination in the area, the International Chernobyl Project had concluded that the long-term radiation doses to people still living in contaminated area were lower than had been originally estimated and were of the same order of magnitude as doses from natural background radiation in some areas of the world. The investigation had found no radiation-related illnesses in the general population, although it had not ruled out the possibility of increased illnesses among a few high-risk groups.

31. The Project had also made several recommendations for further action by the international community. First, the Project had proposed the initiation of programmes to alleviate the psychological effects of the accident. While the importance of such programmes had been recognized by WHO and other organizations dealing with health aspects of the accident, a lack of funds had limited the contribution of international agencies. Secondly, the Project had stressed the importance of implementing programmes to address serious public health issues in the affected areas that were not related to the accident.

32. A third recommendation was that certain high-risk groups, such as children with a high-absorbed thyroid dose, should be covered by specific medical care programmes based on their potential risks. That finding had been reinforced by reports of an increase in the number of children suffering from thyroid cancer in radiation-contaminated areas of Ukraine and Belarus. In order to determine the causes of that increase, it would be necessary to examine the influence not

(Mr. Andemicael, IAEA)

only of the various inhaled iodine isotopes but also of the administered non-radioactive prophylactic iodine as well as endemic iodine-deficiency problems. A reasonable estimate of the thyroid dose received by the affected individuals and population, along with a solid epidemiological study would make it possible to estimate the number of expected cases. Such studies would be neither easy nor inexpensive, and close cooperation among all the health-related projects must be ensured.

33. The fourth recommendation was that epidemiological studies should concentrate on prospective cohort studies of selected high-risk populations. Improvements should be made in the statistical data-collection and registry systems used by local scientists. In addition, internationally accepted standards and methods should be adopted. While some progress had been made, the response to that recommendation remained limited due to insufficient resources.

34. IAEA was concerned that the actions taken to mitigate the consequences of the Chernobyl accident should be based on scientific studies and, given the shortage of resources, priorities should be set according to objective criteria. IAEA fully supported the Inter-Agency Task Force, whose work was an integral part of the broader effort to coordinate United Nations programmes of assistance to the countries in transition.

35. Mr. NOBILO (Croatia) said that one year after the adoption of General Assembly resolution 47/166 on international cooperation and assistance to alleviate the consequences of war in Croatia and to facilitate its recovery, the conflict in the former Yugoslavia continued to undermine Croatia's economic rehabilitation. Croatia was deeply grateful for the extensive humanitarian assistance contributed by the international community; however, that aid had not been directed to the reconstruction and development of the country, since the overwhelming needs of Bosnia and Herzegovina had forced the international community to reallocate its resources. As a result, the bulk of non-humanitarian assistance to Croatia had been provided through various humanitarian programmes under the coordination of UNHCR.

36. With respect to activities undertaken under the consolidated inter-agency appeal, he said it was unfortunate that so few of the projects had been oriented towards meeting the longer-term reconstruction needs of the country. In addition, many of the small-scale projects initiated under the inter-agency appeal had achieved only limited success due to the complex military situation and the lack of close coordination with Croatian authorities.

37. In regard to the humanitarian effort, he said that the distribution of resources allocated under the humanitarian portion of the inter-agency appeal should take differences in the humanitarian situations in the territories of the former Yugoslavia into account. In the case of Croatia, those differences entailed a shift in emphasis away from short-term humanitarian relief towards programmes for post-war economic recovery and rehabilitation. In that connection, he noted with regret that UNDP and the United Nations had not been adequately represented at the Conference on reconstruction and development of the Croatian economy which was held in Zagreb in May 1993. At the Conference, the Prime Minister of Croatia had pointed out that Croatia was aware of the difficulty of undertaking any major restructuring effort through international

(Mr. Nobilo, Croatia)

capital markets under current conditions; as a result, grants and other forms of international technical cooperation would remain the country's principal source of long-term assistance.

38. Croatia fully recognized the complex situation in which General Assembly resolution 47/166 had to be implemented; nevertheless, he believed that, notwithstanding the difficult conditions prevailing in his country, more might have been possible. Therefore, Croatia urged the international community to explore further possibilities for long-term support for Croatia. In that context, Croatia looked forward to the start-up of its first UNDP country programme in 1994. In conclusion, he supported the adoption of a follow-up resolution to General Assembly resolution 47/166.

39. Mr. CALOVSKI (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), said that the international community should respond positively to requests for assistance to Angola, Croatia, El Salvador, Rwanda, Liberia, Somalia, Sudan and Afghanistan and also to States affected by the implementation of economic sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). His delegation supported efforts to strengthen international cooperation and coordination in dealing with the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster as well as efforts to advance the preparatory work for the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction to be held in May 1994.

40. His country was experiencing severe economic hardships as a result of the sanctions regime imposed by the Security Council against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). Unless assistance was provided by the international community, his Government would soon be faced with an impossible situation. While the international community had expressed much sympathy for his country's problems, no tangible assistance had been forthcoming. In that context, Macedonia appreciated the personal commitment and efforts of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs to collect additional humanitarian assistance and to deliver it where necessary.

41. Given the scope of the problems facing neighbouring States as a result of the sanctions and since only a few Member States could be members of the Security Council, the latter should keep informed of all decisions relating to sanctions. Moreover, the time had come to implement Article 50 of the United Nations Charter. To do that it was necessary to ensure that those States which were likely to be most affected by decisions taken by the Council should be involved in the decision-making process.

42. Mr. KHANDOGY (Ukraine) said that while economic sanctions had proven to be a politically viable and effective policy, consequences had not been given adequate attention. Those consequences included loss of markets and interruption of relationships with long-standing trading partners, interruption of transport schedules on the Danube and additional costs to Governments of neighbouring States in connection with enforcing and monitoring of the sanctions regime. For Ukraine, the cost of compliance with the sanctions regime would reach $4 billion by the end of 1993.

(Mr. Khandogy, Ukraine)

43. To date, the recommendations of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 724 (1991) concerning Yugoslavia had not been implemented. The States which bore special responsibility under the Charter for the maintenance of international peace and security, had not shown sufficient understanding of the economic problems encountered by third-party States. Moreover, whenever the latter raised the question of elaborating a mechanism for the implementation of Article 50 of the Charter, the permanent members of the Security Council had, on various pretexts, delayed consideration of the question. It might be worthwhile to consider establishing a special United Nations fund to compensate third-party States for disruptions caused by strict observance of the sanctions regime.

44. The Organization had worked out a solid package of concepts and proposals to solve the extremely complex and sensitive problem of the consequences of sanctions for third-party States. In that connection, he drew attention to the report of the Secretary-General on the subject (A/48/573), General Assembly resolution A/47/120 and the relevant recommendations of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 724 (1991).

45. Ukraine believed that the draft resolution to be submitted on the subject adequately reflected the opportunities for resolving the question within the framework of the United Nations.

46. Mr. CATARINO (Portugal) said that the tragic economic and social situation in Angola could be changed only by bringing the conflict in that country to an end through a political settlement within the context of the Peace Accords signed in Lisbon in 1991. Once a political solution could be reached and the peace process resumed, conditions for economic reconstruction and rehabilitation in Angola would be re-established. In order to bring that moment closer, the international community must show its commitment to peace and development in Angola by continuing to provide material, technical and financial assistance. For its part, Portugal was doing everything in its power to bring about a political settlement. In addition to lending political and diplomatic support for the peace process, his country was contributing to the efforts of the international community, through its cooperative programmes, to extend humanitarian and economic assistance to Angola.

47. Mr. RAICHEV (Bulgaria) said that the application of strict economic and trade sanctions on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) by the Security Council had placed an extraordinary burden on States in the region and undermining economic development.

48. In the case of Bulgaria, the embargo had had an extremely severe impact, for it had disrupted transport along the direct routes to markets in Central and Western Europe and alternative routes which raised the cost of Bulgarian exports. Losses to Bulgaria in 1992 were estimated at approximately US$ 943.6 million. Moreover, the sanctions had severely affected the development of the private sector, thus seriously undermining the ongoing economic reforms. The combined effect of the above factors in the midst of a generalized economic crisis posed a threat to democracy and social stability in Bulgaria. Bulgaria called once again upon the international community to show

(Mr. Raichev, Bulgaria)

its support and understanding. He believed that it was the moral, political and legal responsibility of all United Nations Member States to cooperate to ensure that the difficulties of States adversely affected by the application of trade and economic sanctions met with a sympathetic hearing and that concrete assistance was extended to them. Accordingly, Bulgaria, together with a number of other interested States, would introduce a draft resolution on the subject.

49. Mr. AL-JARRAH (United Arab Emirates), referring to agenda item 100, said that his delegation appreciated the humanitarian role of the United Nations and its specialized agencies in various parts of the world. His country had provided financial and moral assistance to Somalia since the beginning of the crisis there and called upon the parties to the dispute to return to the negotiating table with a view to restoring peace and stability and rebuilding the country's infrastructures.

50. His country had provided monetary aid and emergency assistance to Bosnia, whose Muslim population had suffered greatly at the hands of Serbia, Montenegro and the Bosnian Serbs and Croats. It was confident that the United Nations, the Security Council and the international community would deal with that question on the basis of the United Nations Charter so as to restore peace and stability.

51. The United Arab Emirates urged the international community to provide assistance for the reconstruction of Lebanon and also stressed the importance of the continued role of the United Nations and its specialized agencies in providing humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan.

52. Ms. JOPLING (World Food Programme) said that the World Food Programme (WFP) was responding to an increasing number of emergencies throughout the world and, in 1992, had dispensed more than 3 million tons of food assistance for refugees and displaced persons. As food was only one component of relief efforts, WFP was cooperating closely with other organizations in rehabilitation work in Afghanistan, Angola, Liberia and El Salvador and in addressing emergencies in Rwanda, Somalia and the Sudan.

53. The creation of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs constituted an important milestone for the United Nations system and the Department had already played a crucial role in complex emergency relief efforts, acting as a facilitator in emergencies where peace-keeping, peacemaking and humanitarian issues were inextricably linked. Its role was to coordinate, while the agencies carried out the field operations. WFP welcomed the strong emphasis placed by the Department on the continuum from relief to rehabilitation to development and reaffirmed its commitment to support emergency prevention programmes and the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction.

54. Mr. MAHMOUD (Lebanon), speaking on agenda item 100, drew attention to salient points in the Secretary-General's report on assistance for the reconstruction and development of Lebanon (A/48/453). The report noted a disappointing lack of progress in economic recovery and continuing social hardship, which necessitated humanitarian assistance for low-income and other vulnerable groups. In addition, the continued Israeli occupation was adversely affecting the reconstruction progress in southern Lebanon.

(Mr. Mahmoud, Lebanon)

55. At the request of the Lebanese Government, the Secretary-General had organized an inter-agency emergency humanitarian needs assessment mission to South Lebanon and West Bekaa, which had formulated projects amounting to a total of US$ 29 million.

56. Those and other activities by the United Nations system in Lebanon played a vital catalytic role in capacity-building and developing human resources in different sectors of the economy. The ambitious projects planned for Lebanon, however, remained hostage to regional political circumstances, exacting a heavy toll from the people of that country. While his Government was grateful for the support provided by friendly countries of the Gulf region and the European Community, Lebanon had been suffering for 17 years and he regretted, therefore, the reluctance by donor countries to support vigorous efforts to revitalize the Lebanese economy.

57. Mr. DUBČEK (Slovakia) speaking on agenda item 169, said that, while the Slovak Republic complied fully with all the resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council, sanctions rarely affected the violator only. As the Secretary-General had stated in "An Agenda for Peace", States confronted with special economic problems should also have a realistic possibility of having their difficulties addressed. Having exhausted the possibilities available under Article 50 of the Charter of the United Nations, the Slovak Republic was among those States which were still severely affected by the sanctions against the former Republic of Yugoslavia.

58. Slovakia had maintained close trade links over many years with Yugoslavia and the imposition of sanctions had reduced to a sixth the total turnover between those two countries. In addition, the conversion of military production introduced in 1990 had severely impacted on the economy of Slovakia, resulting in large-scale unemployment. The Slovak economy remained too dependent on its heavy industry, which required special means of transportation such as that provided by the Danube. The sanctions regime had virtually closed that waterway, with a pronounced negative impact on all the riparian States. Delays caused by the authorization procedures were resulting in additional economic losses and had led many companies to the brink of bankruptcy.

59. In addition, a domino effect had caused whole branches of the economy to be destroyed, resulting in total losses of US$ 246 million, directly or indirectly attributable to the sanctions regime. The situation was further aggravated by punitive tolls which the Yugoslav authorities and the authorities of the so-called Republic of Srpska Krajina illegally imposed on vessels passing through that territory. Finally, shipping companies operating on the Danube were only operating at a fraction of their capacity, with consequent losses of revenue and thousands of jobs.

60. Effective measures were urgently needed to mitigate the serious negative impact of such sanctions; otherwise the credibility of the Security Council and the United Nations itself would be undermined. His delegation therefore welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on economic assistance to States affected by the implementation of Security Council resolutions (A/48/573) and commended the establishment of the Informal Open-ended Working Group of the General Assembly and fully supported the draft resolution on the issue.

61. Mr. MIHAI (Romania), speaking on agenda item 169, said that Romania was probably the worst-affected country in the region. As a neighbouring State and major trading partner of the former Republic of Yugoslavia, Romania was now faced with mass unemployment, the closure of many companies and far-reaching social implications which the Government lacked the means to address.

62. In addition to those more visible implications, increasing difficulties were caused by the disruption of established communications routes. The traditional traffic on the Danube had almost disappeared, with serious economic and social consequences for all the riparian countries. He insisted that recent reports in the press of alleged violations by Romania of the sanctions regime were entirely unfounded and reaffirmed his Government's determination to comply with the regime. At the same time, he appealed to Member States to assist countries affected by the sanctions, since strict observance of the sanctions regime and adequate support for affected third States should go hand in hand.

63. Mrs. KECSKES (Hungary), speaking on agenda item 103, said that her delegation shared the views expressed in the Secretary-General's report on the item (A/48/534). She appealed to the international community for assistance in facilitating the return of refugees and internally displaced persons. There were over 40,000 refugees from the former Republic of Yugoslavia and Croatia in Hungary and only effective international assistance and political solutions could bring about their return.

64. Finally, she stressed the vital link between economic recovery and peaceful international relations and said that the cessation of the armed conflict in Croatia was an essential precondition for the recovery of that country.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.